

Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

Annual Report
2008



October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008

**State Rehabilitation Council
for the Blind Council Members
During Federal Fiscal Year 2008**

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Business, Industry & Labor

Acronym List

| | |
|--------------|--|
| BEP | Business Enterprise Program |
| CSAVR | Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation |
| FFY | Federal Fiscal Year |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| FSD | Family Support Division |
| FTE | Full Time Equivalent |
| IPE | Individualized Plan for Employment |
| RCEP | Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program |
| RSA | Rehabilitation Services Administration |
| RSB | Rehabilitation Services for the Blind |
| RT | Rehabilitation Teacher |
| SRC | State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind |
| VR | Vocational Rehabilitation |
| VRC | Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor |

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| RSB Client Success Story - Pat Buckman | 5 |
|---|----------|

Section I

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Services Provided by RSB | 6 |
|---------------------------------------|----------|

| | |
|---|----------|
| RSB Client Success Story - Matthew Kenison | 7 |
|---|----------|

Section II

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Matters Presented to the Council | 8 |
| Deputy Director | 8 |
| Public Forums | 8 |
| Consumer Satisfaction Surveys | 8 |
| SRC Appointments | 9 |
| Shared Vision Summit | 9 |
| Electronic Case Management | 9 |
| Young-Williams Call Center | 10 |
| Informed Choice Policy | 10 |
| Small Business Policy | 10 |
| RSB Audit | 10 |
| National SRC Meeting | 11 |
| Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment | 11 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| RSB Client Success Story – Kelly Matthews | 12 |
|--|-----------|

Section III

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Statistical Analysis of RSB | 13 |
| Open Cases | 14 |
| Applicants | 14 |
| Closures Types | 14 |
| Employment Closures | 15 |
| Successful Closures | 15 |
| Cost of Employment Closures | 15 |
| Income from Employment Closures | 15 |
| Post-Employment | 16 |
| Unsuccessful Closures | 16 |
| Cases Closed Prior to Eligibility | 16 |
| Cases Closed After Individualized Plan for Employment Initiated .. | 16 |
| Administrative Reviews/Mediations/Hearings Conducted | 16 |
| RSB in Comparison | 16 |
| Continued Vision for the Future | 17 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| RSB Client Success Story - Patricia Murphy | 18 |
|---|-----------|

RSB Client Success Story

Pat Buckman

Pat Buckman was referred to RSB by Diana Beckley, a rehabilitation education professional with longstanding knowledge of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. One day, while getting her drivers license renewed, Diana noticed that the licensing technician was having a lot of trouble reading, filling out her paperwork, operating the camera and was taking a very long time to do the job. She recognized the technician's problem as probably being caused by some sort of visual impairment.

Diana informed Pat about RSB and the services RSB could offer. Pat was hesitant, but agreed that RSB's services might help her retain her employment. Diana made the referral and RSB's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor, Steve Carter, met with Pat to determine her eligibility and begin the assessment process.

The assessment determined that Pat had macular degeneration. Pat was having such great difficulty on the job that she was on the verge of quitting because she couldn't see to do her work. Pat's counselor performed a job analysis and referred her for assessment of her orientation and mobility and activities of daily living skills. Upon completion of this process, the counselor met with Pat to develop an employment plan which would lead to her goal of retaining her job at the license bureau.

RSB provided Pat with training in alternative skills of blindness, and with adaptive equipment, such as magnifying and screen reading software, a larger monitor for her computer, a Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system for reading and filling out required paperwork on the job.

As a result of the services provided by RSB, Pat was able to retain her position as a licensing technician, where she is working successfully to this day.

Section I

Services Provided by RSB

Missouri citizens who are blind or visually impaired work as full active partners in a rehabilitation process towards a goal of achieving success in employment. The client has an opportunity and a responsibility to exercise informed choice as part of being an active member and partner in the rehabilitation team. This team includes the client, vocational rehabilitation counselor, rehabilitation teacher, orientation and mobility specialist, rehabilitation assistant and client's representative and/or family members. The responsibility of the rehabilitation team is to provide information, develop opportunities, and work together towards achievement of mutually agreed to employment goal.

Vocation rehabilitation services may include:

- Diagnosis and evaluation
- Physical Restoration
- Vocational training, including college
- Continuing education
- Tools and equipment
- Adaptive technology
- Job development
- Job placement
- Post-employment services
- Supported employment
- Instruction in daily living skills, including Braille and travel training
- Community-based rehabilitation services for adjustment to blindness and attainment of alternative skills

"RSB will assist and treat the (client) as an active and full partner in the vocational rehabilitation process, from application to the final goal of employment."
RSB Informed Choice Policy

RSB Client Success Story

Matthew Kenison

Matthew Kenison is totally blind and was working part-time as an assembly line worker in 2000. Matt had bigger employment goals for himself. Matt wanted a full-time job with benefits, a job using customer service skills; something he enjoyed, but had not done since leaving a part-time order taking job in 1994.

Matt was aware that he would need to update and upgrade his skills in order to be competitive in today's labor market. Matt contacted RSB and requested that we facilitate his employment goal through services.

After determining that Matthew was eligible for VR service, Matt and his VR Counselor, Penny Perr, began working on the plan to get Matt to where he wanted to be, a full-time job with benefits using customer services skills.

With RSB's support, Matt participated in and completed leadership training from a nationally recognized seminar series. Matt completed advanced instruction in orientation and mobility to acquire more confidence and skills in travel, and he acquired adaptive computer technology and completed training in the use of JAWS screen reading software. Matt, RSB's Job Development Specialist and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor contacted many employer prospects. One of those employer prospects turned into an employer for Matt, the St. Louis County Cab Company. Matt, RSB and the manager of the St. Louis County Cab Company worked together to determine what was needed to assist the company to fully support their newest employee. Matt was provided the necessary software and specific training in its use through the collaborative efforts of the employer and RSB.

Matt is now a successful full-time Call-Back Operator for the St. Louis County Cab Company earning the same wages customarily paid in the industry and with benefits. After a cab has been dispatched, Matt contacts the customer by phone and informs them that their cab is on the way, giving the customer an approximate arrival time. Matt accesses all the necessary information for contacting the customer via computer with the use of Job Access with JAWS.

Section II

Matters Presented to the Council

Deputy Director

In July 2007, the Deputy Director of RSB resigned his position and Mark Laird was appointed acting Deputy Director. On June 1, 2008, Mark's appointment was made permanent. The Council is very supportive of Mark's appointment and feels he will do an excellent job in his new position.

Public Forums

The SRC has continued to hold public forums throughout the state which allows individuals who are receiving services, and individuals who refer clients to RSB, to voice opinions and concerns about the services of RSB. During the period covered during this report the Council held a public forum in Hannibal (November 2007), Kansas City (February 2008), Jefferson City (May 2008), and Springfield (August 2008).

The Council held discussion to increase input at the public forums. Ideas to increase the public attendance were:

- Inviting employers of blind or visually impaired.
- Inviting Independent Living Centers.
- Target mailings to client currently receiving services.
- Target mailings to area educators.
- Hold the forums in locations where the blind community is already going.

Topics of discussion at the public forums included detailed discussion about RSB's services and what role educators can play in assisting students and clients in need of RSB's services, education and areas that need to be addressed for blind or visually impaired individuals and communication barriers of deaf/blind individuals.

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

The SRC has sent Consumer Satisfaction Surveys to individuals who have closed cases with RSB on a quarterly basis. To improve the rate of return it was voted and passed unanimously by the Council to have a follow up survey sent 30 days after the initial survey is mailed. Clients are questioned about their level of satisfaction with the services they receive from RSB, with 1 being the lowest level of satisfaction and 5 being the highest level of satisfaction. Two different surveys are sent, one to individuals whose cases were closed in competitive employment and one to all individuals whose cases were closed in any other status than competitive employment. The SRC reviews and analyzes the concerns submitted at their meetings and advises RSB of trends noted. The SRC also explores ideas for improving client satisfaction and ways to enhance the surveys validity and returns.

Individuals whose cases were closed in competitive employment had the highest levels of satisfaction in the following three categories:

- They had the final say in their selection of a vocational goal.
- Their rehabilitation plan was individualized to meet their goals.

- RSB staff were knowledgeable about their needs as a person who is blind.

Individuals whose cases were closed in any status other than competitive employment had the highest level of satisfaction in the following three categories:

- The choices of services available from RSB were sufficient to meet their needs.
- They received services from RSB without excessive waiting.
- RSB staff were knowledgeable about their needs as a person who is blind.

SRC Appointments

Throughout the past year the Council and RSB have been very active in getting Council members' appointments current to ensure a fully constituted Council. RSB and the Council submitted numerous applications to the Governor's office for review. At the February 2008 Council meeting, there was discussion about coordinating a date for training for the new Council members using the new online training that was developed by RCEP 7 to be held at either the August or November 2008 meeting. At the May 2008 meeting, it was suggested that the Council develop a standing committee to review the status of memberships. Four individuals have been appointed to the Council and more are expected before the November 2008 meeting.

Shared Vision Summit

A Shared Vision Summit was held at the Missouri School for the Blind in August 2007. There were more than 20 public and private entities/organizations that served the blind or visually impaired who participated in the Summit which was aimed at improving services to visually impaired clients. A follow up summit was planned for this year. During the planning process of the second summit, many different obstacles presented themselves. There have been discussions about how to restructure this Summit to achieve maximum participation. One suggestion that is being considered is having smaller sessions in several different areas so that individuals from different regions would have to travel less to participate. The same agenda would be used at each location.

Electronic Case Management

The Council has been informed at every Council meeting about the status of the new electronic case management system that RSB is purchasing. The request for bid on the new system was publicized in September 2007. The responses went through an evaluation process through the Office of Administration. The bid was awarded to Libera for their System 7 program. Libera staff came to RSB and worked with RSB employees in small groups. At the date of award, a tentative live date was set for January 1, 2009. The Business Enterprise Program is going to be the first program to run in System 7. It was estimated that it would take three to four months to get through the first phase of conversion which consisted of transferring paper business practice to the electronic process. At the August 2008 SRC meeting, RSB informed the Council that all of the program manuals are online and have gone through the user acceptability test. There are three forms that are getting ready to go through the user acceptability test. The live date for the entire system has been pushed back to April 2009 to ensure the entire system is user friendly before the system is implemented within the agency.

Young-Williams Call Center

The Council has been updated on a regular basis about the Young-Williams Call Center which is contracted through the State of Missouri and opened a year ago in September. This call center is run by a firm in Mississippi that has several call centers handling child support payment related issues. The call center employs 100 full time staff and 10 part time staff. Jim Brinkmann, Mid-Mo District Supervisor, has been working with the supervisor at this call center and an RSB rehabilitation engineer has been working with the call center's system so that it will work with Jaws and ZoomText. RSB has made three placements with Young-Williams during the period of this report and one client remains there at this time. As call centers have a high turnover rate, there is a potential for a large number of placements over the coming years.

Informed Choice Policy

At the November 2007 meeting, a copy of the policy on Informed Choice was given to Council members. The policy was reviewed as a follow up to comments made by a participant at the previous public forum. There was a brief review of the process of client choice. Choice of a vendor, or any other choice that is made during the VR process, is not unlimited because there are rules and regulations that RSB has to follow.

The current policy states "Informed choice does not mean unfettered choice, but rather refers to choices that facilitate a successful employment outcome and that are consistent with (client's) strengths, resources, concerns, abilities, and capabilities." Clients exercise informed choice; they are not just given a list of services/service providers and told to choose. RSB will assist the client in acquiring information to empower the client in the informed choice process. Complete services are provided to ensure employment is secured or maintained. The Council confirmed support for this policy as written. See RSB's philosophy on Informed Choice on page 7, the entire Informed Choice policy can be found at http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/manual/vrman/propolman/propol_choice.htm.

Small Business Policy

RSB informed the Council at the November 2007 meeting, that they wanted to change the Small Business Policy. RSB's current policy for small businesses is that RSB will pay up to 75% of the start up cost up to \$3,750. RSB has reviewed this policy and sees the \$3,750 as their share of the start up but in addition they can also purchase equipment. RSB plans to initiate a policy that keeps the 75% RSB/25% client contribution but raises the maximum amount that RSB may extend to \$17,750. This is the average start up cost including what is spent on equipment. Any exceptions to this policy would have to be approved by the RSB Deputy Director. A motion was made for the Council to support RSB's policy revision and was passed unanimously.

RSB Audit

At the November 2007 meeting, RSB staff reported to the Council that RSB was going through a single audit by the State Auditor's office which is a fiscal and eligibility audit. The Auditor's office reviewed two rounds of cases. RSB is currently in a two year audit cycle.

National SRC Meeting

Council members Debbi Head and Brady Clevenger attended the national SRC meeting and gave an overview of the information they received at the August 2008 meeting. At the meeting, demonstrations were done on new modules for online training for new SRC members. These modules teach step by step the role SRC members play. This is available at www.erehab.org. Some of the topics discussed at the meeting were how to increase attendance at the SRC public forums, recruiting new members, how to do your state plan and survey results. Overall, it was a very informative meeting.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

At the August 2008 meeting, RSB informed the Council that RSB is entering into the third year of the three year assessment of comprehensive statewide needs, which is due next year. The regulations specify that every three years an assessment has to be conducted concentrating on individuals with the most significant disabilities, who are minorities, or are from groups that are under-served or un-served. RSB asked the Council to assist RSB in identifying areas of unmet needs. This assessment is a compilation of information collected every year and then reported every three years. The Council is going to bring issues and suggestions of ways to collect information about these issues especially from the un-served.

RSB Client Success Story

Kelly Matthews

Kelly Matthews is a 32 year old young man whose vision was impaired as a result of Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). He referred himself for VR services in February 2006. Kelly had received services in the 1990's, but told his counselor that he simply was not ready to deal with his blindness and didn't take advantage of the services offered at that time.

Kelly worked sporadically at his home-grown music studio recording small Christian bands and artists. Kelly also hosted a weekly Christian radio program through his church on a volunteer basis. Kelly's primary income came from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and he also received medical assistance through MoHealthNet.

Kelly met with his VR Counselor, Robert Wissore, and developed his employment goal to be a customer service representative. As part of his VR plan, Kelly chose to attend Lions World Services for the Blind for evaluation of his vocational and blindness skills. After a short evaluation it became apparent that Lions Worlds' curriculum did not meet Kelly's needs, so he returned home. Following discussion with his counselor, Kelly decided that an in-home computer applications training should be the next step. Kelly worked hard during this in-home training, and learned how to use ZoomText in conjunction with other computer applications. He successfully completed this training in August 2007.

As 2008 began, Kelly's counselor encouraged him to use his newly learned skills and energize his employment search once again. With assistance from RSB Kelly was subsequently hired for an Administrative Assistant position at Trinity Marine in August 2008. RSB worked together with Trinity Marine to ensure Kelly's success on the job, providing a Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) to help with reading regular print documents, as well as software and a large-screen monitor to assist him in working with electronic information.

In a recent phone conversation with his counselor, Kelly proudly reported that he no longer receives SSI or MoHealthNet benefits. Kelly is very happy with his employment, and it has given him a great psychological boost to be providing for himself for the first time.

Section III

Statistical Analysis of RSB

Status Chart:

Status 00: Referral
Status 02: Applicant
Status 06: Extended Evaluation
Status 08: Closure from 00, 02, 06
Status 10: IPE development
Status 12: IPE completed
Status 14: Counseling and Guidance Only
Status 16: Physical and Mental Restoration
Status 18: Training
Status 20: Ready for employment
Status 22: In Employment
Status 24: Service interrupted
Status 26: Closed, rehabilitated
Status 28: Closed, after IPE initiated
Status 30: Closed, before IPE initiated
Status 32: Post-employment services
Status 33: Closed, employment maintained
Status 35: Closed, reopen in 00

Statistical Analysis of RSB Operations

RSB is the designated state unit described in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act as Amended in 1998 for persons with visual disabilities in the State of Missouri. RSB is a section of and reports to the Family Support Division, part of the Missouri Department of Social Services. RSB has a total of 114 full time equivalent staff positions (FTE's) in FFY 2008; there were 114 in FFY 2007 also. The following numbers of staff are included in the FTE count:

18 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC's)
19 Rehabilitation Teachers (RT's)
6 Orientation and Mobility Specialists
7 District Supervisors
22 Rehabilitation Assistants
7 Clerical Supervisors
5 Children's Specialists
5 Business Enterprise Area Supervisors
2 Job Development Specialists

There are 23 administrative and management staff in various positions at the central office in Jefferson City, as well as part-time employees assisting with reader and driver functions. All of the positions named above are directly involved in providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

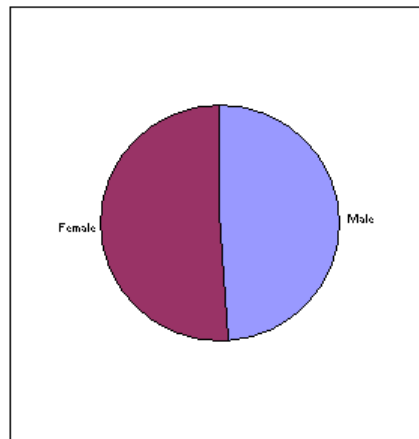
Open Cases

There were 1411 open cases in FFY 2008, 571 of these were new cases.

Applicants

In order to receive vocational rehabilitation services, each client must complete an application and undergo eligibility consideration. When an application has been signed, a client is considered as being in “02” status. Reviewing this group of individuals can help determine if there are anomalies which affect certain population groups such as women and ethnic minorities.

During FFY 2008, a total of 571 persons applied for vocational rehabilitation services; there were 517 in FFY 2007 and 546 in FFY 2006. Of the 571 applicants, 280 of them were male and 292 were female. The youngest applicant was 14 years old and the oldest applicant was 88 years old. The average age of applicants was 42 years old, the same as FFY 2007 and FFY 2006. Of those applicants who identified themselves as a member of a racial/ethnic group, 395 applicants were Caucasian, 142 were African-American, 2 were American Indian or Alaska Native, 2 were Asian and 9 were Hispanic or Latino.



From applicant status, cases are moved to either “06 Status” (extended evaluation), “08 Status” (closed before eligibility is established) or “Status 10” (Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE]).

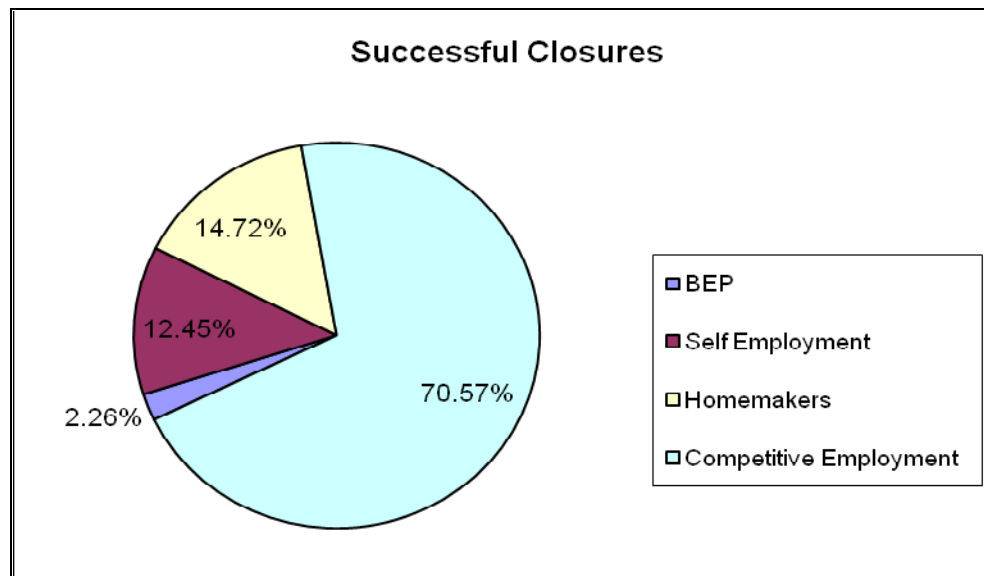
Closures Types

RSB categorizes closed cases based on whether or not services have led to employment. In considering whether or not a case has been successful, the type of employment is considered. Employment of clients in competitive work (work in an integrated environment which pays at least minimum wage), self-employment or the Business Enterprise Program is considered as targeted employment. This is the standard Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) considers as appropriate for determining an agency’s success or failure. Additionally, there is one other category, which is considered (during this Fiscal Year) as successful closures, but not as targeted closures - employment as homemakers. Each of these are considered successful employment closure; however, the most weight is accorded to closures of the targeted group. All closures which result in employment are referred to as “Status 26” closures.

Employment Closures

Successful Closures

RSB successfully closed 265 cases with clients who achieved their employment goals during FFY 2008. Included in this total are 187 competitive employment closures, (186 in FFY 2007), 39 homemakers, (27 in FFY 2007), 33 who achieved self-employment, (35 in FFY 2007), and 6 who found employment through the Business Enterprise Program, (7 in FFY 2007). Total employment success has improved when compared to FFY 2007, when there were 256 closures.



Cost of Employment Closures

The average cost of a successful employment case was \$13,766.11 (\$12,219 in FFY 2007). The least amount spent on a case was \$0 (the same in FFY 2007) and the most spent on a case was \$166,310 (\$122,141 in FFY 2007).

Income from Employment Closures

The 265 successful employment closures achieved by RSB clients during FFY 2008, resulted in average weekly earnings of approximately \$395.91. On an annual basis this group would earn \$4,652,722.88. Assuming a 20% tax rate; this group of clients would repay the cost of their rehabilitation (\$3,518,415) in a little less than four years.

The average hourly wage of clients in successful employment was \$12.09 per hour. Of the 265 clients in successful employment, 197 had health insurance of some kind, 118 of them had multiple types of insurance coverage.

This example of rehabilitation paying for itself does not consider the substantially greater cost savings that result from the decrease in the benefits such as Social Security, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, etc., upon which clients may otherwise rely if they had not obtained this employment.

Post-Employment

Once the client has been employed for a minimum of 90 days, and all services required by the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) have been delivered, the case can be successfully closed. However, in some cases, services become necessary to retain employment or adjust to new employment. For those cases, RSB can reopen the case for “post-employment services”. Under post-employment services, Status 32, RSB can provide services for needs which are discovered after employment has begun, or that arise as employment continues. These services are limited to those which can be provided under the existing IPE. If the employment cannot be maintained, or if a new IPE is necessary, the case must be closed and a new case opened. In FFY 2008, 26 cases were opened for post-employment services.

Unsuccessful Closures

Cases Closed Prior to Eligibility

Status 08 closures occur when clients apply for services but their cases are closed prior to their achieving eligibility. During FFY 2008, 84 cases were closed in this status (130 in FFY 2007). Some frequently occurring reasons for this type of closure are: no disabling condition, failure to cooperate and unable to locate or contact.

Cases Closed After Individualized Plan for Employment Initiated

Status 28 closures are those cases which are closed after IPE services have been delivered, but in which employment was not achieved. These cases are of particular interest to the SRC because they often occur after the expenditure of significant resources. In FFY 2008, RSB had 74 Status 28 closures and spent \$830,007 on these cases. The lowest amount spent on a case was \$0 and the highest amount spent was \$55,906. Some frequently occurring reasons for this type of closure are: unable to locate, refusal of services and failure to cooperate.

Administrative Reviews/Mediations/Hearings Conducted

RSB had one request for a Fair Hearing in FFY 2008. There were no mediations actually held during the fiscal year.

RSB in Comparison

In FFY 2006 RSA’s national reporting shows the hourly wage earned after being placed in successful employment was \$12.41 per hour, RSB’s average hourly wage was \$12.88. The national average of hours worked per week was 30.77; RSB’s clients worked an average of 30.83 hours. The national average for the time between application and closure (in months) for individuals with successful employment outcomes was 27.9; RSB’s average was 24.2 months. The national average cost per individual served was \$8,888.99 and the average cost of an employment outcome was \$50,802.56. RSB’s average cost for an individual successful employment outcome was \$7,125.89 and the average cost per employment outcome was \$41,393.89. The national average of clients served per staff was 13.58 with an average of 2.94 employment outcomes per staff. RSB served an average of 18.8 individuals per staff and had an average of 3.24 employment outcomes.

Continued Vision for the Future

- RSB's mission is the creation of opportunities for the personal and vocational success of blind or visually impaired clients.
- The SRC continues to work cooperatively with RSB to improve the services offered to meet what we consider to be the unique rehabilitation needs of clients with visual disabilities.
- We believe in the abilities of persons who are blind or visually impaired.
- Finally, the SRC believes that with the proper training, alternative skills and assistive technology that are provided through the specialized programs for persons with visual disabilities, individuals who are blind can be vocationally, socially and economically competitive.

RSB Client Success Story

Patricia Murphy

Patricia Murphy began working with RSB in January of 2007. At the time, Patricia worked for Wal-Mart in the fabric department. Patricia was experiencing deteriorating vision due to macular holes and cataracts. Without health insurance and facing the possibility of losing her job, Patricia worked hard to find help. She was successful in finding the Knights of Columbus and they paid for her first surgery; many more surgeries were recommended. Patricia was then referred to RSB by the Mason Eye Clinic at the University of Missouri-Columbia Hospital.

Pat's VR Counselor, Katherine Schroeder, determined that Pat was eligible for VR services and funded a series of surgeries needed to restore her vision and her capability to retain her job. Patricia underwent the surgeries and a grueling recovery process for over a year. Yet she remained ever kind and warm as we pressed on. While Patricia's eyes healed and she continued to work at Wal-Mart, RSB provided her with low vision aids that she greatly appreciated and which were essential for her to continue to perform the duties of her position. Patricia always provided a sincere, heart felt "thank you" in every meeting and conversation. She appreciated what RSB was doing and made sure her counselor knew this every time they spoke.

Patricia continues to use the low vision equipment provided by RSB in her daily life and reports that her vision is now around 20/50. She has retained her job, her independence and most pleasant demeanor.